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PAGE 01 STATE 204219
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USINT BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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TAGS: PGOV, EGEN, ENRG

SUBJECT: POST SERIES ON IRAQ

1.
SUMMARY. THREE-PART WASHINGTON POST SERIES INITIATED AUG 6
GAVE IRAQ WIDE-SPREAD PUBLICITY. ARTICLES CONCENTRATED
HEAVILY ON ECONOMIC PROGRESS AND POTENTIAL OF THE COUNTRY,
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PAGE 02 STATE 204219

DRAWING, ON BALANCE, A FAVORABLE OVERALL PICTURE. END
SUMMARY.

2.
WASHINGTON POST RAN SERIES OF THREE LONG ARTICLES ON IRAQ,
IN WHICH AUTHOR, J. P. SMITH, FOCUSED HEAVILY ON THE
ECONOMIC PROGRESS THE BAATH REGIME HAS MADE AND THE
POTENTIAL ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE COUNTRY

IN THE YEARS TO COME.

3.

IMAGE. NOTING THAT WESTERNERS FREQUENTLY CONSTRUE IRAQIS TO BE AN "AGGRESSIVE, WARLIKE PEOPLE, WHO AID INTERNATIONAL TERRORISTS, KILL THEIR OWN KURDS, DENOUNCE THEIR FELLOW

ARABS, AND CLING RABIDLY TO THE DREAM OF DRIVING THE ISRAELIS INTO THE SEA,'SMITH CHARACTERIZED IRAQ AS ONE OF THE MOST REPRESSIVE POLICE STATES IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AS WELL A HERMIT WHOSE SELF-IMPOSED ISOLATION LIES IN THE PARANOIA OF A SECURITY-CONSCIOUS GOVERNMENT. SMITH CONCLUDED THAT, DESPITE IRAQ'S ATTEMPTS TO BROADEN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE WEST AND WITH ITS GULF NEIGHBORS, BAGHDAD WILL HAVE A HARD TIME IN SHAKING ITS IMAGE AS AN INTERNATIONAL RENEGADE AND PREDICTED THAT CHANGES IN WESTERN PERCEPTIONS WILL COME BUT SLOWLY.

ECONOMICS. IN DESCRIBING COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SMITH HIGHLIGHTED IRAQ'S CONSERVATIVE INVESTMENT AND PURCHASING POLICIES NOTING THE ABSENCE OF SHOWPIECE ITEMS SUCH AS DOLLS 100-A-DAY HOTELS, ARTICLES ALSO MENTIONED THERE WERE NO UNNEEDED AIRPORTS IN IRAQ, AND NO MACHINERY RUSTING ON THE DOCKS. CITING IRAQ'S ECONOMIC PRAGMATISM IN ITS ATTEMPTS TO BUILD A FIRMER, BROADER AGRICULTURAL BASE, SMITH STATED THAT "THE MAIN FOCUS OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IRAQ'S DEVELOPMENT EFFORT CONTINUES TO BE ON THE COUNTRY'S TRADITIONAL STRENGTH--AGRICULTURE." ARTICLES REFERRED TO "VAST IRRIGATION AND LAND RECLAMATION PROJECTS," AND LIVE-STOCK BREEDING PROGRAMS, INCLUDING CATTLE, SHEEP, AND CHICKENS. SMITH ALSO DEVOTED CONSIDERABLE SPACE TO THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS BEING DERIVED BY THE MASSES. SERIES QUOTED AN IMF OFFICIAL WHO ALLEGED THAT IRAQ HAS ONE OF THE BEST THIRD WORLD RECORDS FOR WEALTH-SHARING AMONG ITS POPULACE. FULL COLUMN DEVOTED TO GOI SUBSIDIZED HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION, MEDICAL CARE, AND EDUCATION, AS WELL AS PROVISION OF ELECTRICITY TO EVEN THE SMALLEST OF IRAQI VILLAGES. AUTHOR ALSO COMMENTED FAVORABLY ON THE RELATIVELY CORRUPTION-FREE STATE OF IRAQI BUREAUCRACY.

PETROLEUM. SMITH CHARACTERIZED IRAQI OIL POLICY AS PRAGMATIC AND INDEPENDENT, AS EVIDENCED BY THEIR DISREGARD OF THE 1973 OIL EMBARGO. WHILE SMITH DID NOT MAKE CONCLUSIVE PREDICTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE IRAQI PETROLEUM INDUSTRY, THE STATISTICS HE USED, AND SKILL HE ATTRIBUTED TO GOI IN MANAGING ITS RESOURCES CREATED AN AIR OF ANTICIPATION FOR BIGGER AND BETTER THINGS TO COME. SUGGESTING THAT IRAQ'S PETROLEUM RESERVES MIGHT BE AS HIGH AS 130 BB, AUTHOR

QUOTED IRAQI PLANNERS AS SAYING THEY HOPE TO BE PUMPING 7 M BBD BY 1985. REMAINDER OF ARTICLE DEVOTED TO GENERAL WORLD IGNORANCE ON SIZE AND IMPORTANCE OF IRAQI OIL RESERVES, WHICH SMITH ATTRIBUTES TO BAGHDAD SECRECY, AS WELL AS PRESENTLY UNSPECTACULAR RATE OF PRODUCTION. ACCORDING TO THE IRAQI OFFICIALS WITH WHOM SMITH SPOKE, HOWEVER, THE MAJORS WERE RESPONSIBLE BECAUSE OF THEIR RE-

LUCTANCE TO DETRACT FROM THEIR SAUDI CONCESSIONS BY CONDUCTING ADDITIONAL EXPLORATION IN IRAQ.

RELATIONS WITH THE USSR AND THE WEST. ECONOMIC PRAGMATISM, SELF-INTEREST, AND A NEW SELF-CONCEPTION OF IRAQ AS A WEALTHY OIL STATE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COUNTRY'S SHIFT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AWAY FROM MOSCOW TOWARD THE WEST. SMITH DESCRIBED SADDAM HUSSEIN AS "CLEARLY THE ARCHITECT OF IRAQ'S SWING TOWARD THE WEST." USSR TOOK A BEATING IN ARTICLES, WHICH CARRIED TALES OF IRAQI DISSATISFACTION WITH SOVIET TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AS WELL AS IRAQ'S FIRM INTENTION NOT TO "ALLOW THE SOVIETS OR ANYONE ELSE TO INTERFERE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS" (ABDUL MAJID RAFIA). "THE COMMUNIST PARTIES ALL OVER THE WORLD ARE ALWAYS TRYING TO GET POWER. WE CHOP OFF ANY WEED THAT POPS UP," SAID NAIM HADDAD. ACCORDING TO SMITH, IRAQ'S INTEREST IN OBTAINING THE BEST TECHNOLOGY, AS WELL AS ITS ECONOMIC PRAGMATISM "SEEMS LIKELY TO ULTIMATELY BRING CLOSER POLITICAL TIES WITH THE WEST." ON RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., ARTICLE REPEATED THE FAMILIAR DUO OF US WILLINGNESS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS AND THE OBSTACLE OUR MIDDLE EAST POLICY POSES TO THE IRAQIS IN ACCEPTING OUR OFFER.

PAN ARABISM. ACCORDING TO SMITH, BAGHDAD IS "LOSING INTEREST IN THE DREAM OF USING THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE TO UNITE THE ARAB NATION." REFERRING TO SUCH RENTS IN THE FABRIC OF PAN-ARABISM AS IRAQ'S ANTI-SADAT CAMPAIGN, AND ITS LONG-STANDING, OFTEN VIOLENT, RIVALRY WITH SYRIA, SMITH CONCLUDED THAT IRAQ MAY BE TURNING AWAY FROM THE FERTILE CRESCENT TO THE GULF.

THE GULF. WHILE THE CONSERVATIVE GULF STATES REMAIN UNCONVINCED THAT IRAQ IS INTERESTED IN TEAMING UP WITH THEM, SMITH BELIEVED THAT BIG MONEY AND THE PROSPECT OF SHARING IN GENERAL GULF PROSPERITY ARE WORKING CHANGES ON THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT. ARTICLE NOTED 1975 FENCING MENDING OPERATION WITH IRAN, AS WELL AS RECENT COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH KUWAIT, AND LACK OF IRAQI OPPOSITION TO SALE OF F-15'S TO SAUDI ARABIA. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN A SEPARATE SERIES OF COMPANION PIECES, SMITH TOUCHED ON IRAQI ACQUISITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAPABILITY, KURDISTAN, AND TERRORISM. SMITH DREW NO CONCLUSIONS ABOUT IRAQI NUCLEAR INTENTIONS, BUT MERELY QUOTED NAIM HADDAD AS SAYING "IF ISRAEL OWNS THE ATOM BOMB, THEN THE ARABS MUST GET AN ATOM BOMB." SMITH'S SHORT ARTICLE ON KURDISTAN, ENTITLED "REBELLIOUS KURDISTAN NOW CONQUERED AND QUIET," HIGHLIGHTED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE AREA, WHILE NOTING THE NUMBER OF KURDS WHO FLED IN 1975, AS WELL

AS GOI'S RELOCATION PROGRAM. SMITH ALSO QUOTED HADDAD AS SAYING THAT THE CIA IS STILL PROVIDING CLANDESTINE SUPPORT TO THE PESMERGA, ARRANGING FOR RELOCATION OF ITS TROOPS IN THE US. WHILE MAIN SERIES OF ARTICLES MADE ONLY PASSING REFERENCES TO IRAQ'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM MOVEMENT, SMITH CONCLUDED IN A SEPARATE PIECE THAT, IN LIGHT OF THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF SYRIAN OFFICIALS AND THE DEATHS OF ALI YASSIN AND SAID HAMMAMI, "IRAQ'S PROTESTATIONS THAT IT DOES NOT SUPPORT TERRORISM... RING THIN." ACCORDING TO SMITH, ABU NIDAL HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO OPERATE OUT OF BAGHDAD IN EXCHANGE FOR CARRYING OUT SPECIAL ASSASSINATION ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE IRAQI REGIME.

10. COMMENT. WHILE ARTICLES DID NOT IGNORE HEAVY-HANDEDNESS OF IRAQI GOVERNMENT, HIGHLIGHTING OF POSITIVE ASPECTS OF IRAQ'S DEVELOPMENT DURING THE PAST TEN YEARS TENDED TO OBSCURE POLITICAL REALITIES IN FAVOR OF ECONOMICS, THUS PRODUCING WHAT SOME WASHINGTON OBSERVERS CHARACTERIZED AS A HIGHLY FAVORABLE COMMENTARY ON THE COUNTRY AND ITS PROSPECTS. REASON FOR MINIMAL TREATMENT OF THE DYNAMICS OF INTERNAL IRAQI POLITICS MAY BE DUE TO WASHINGTON POST'S DECISION TO RUN THE IRAQ ARTICLES AS PART OF THEIR 'PRIMER' SERIES, WHICH THEY PUBLISH FROM TIME TO TIME ON LESSER KNOWN COUNTRIES. AUTHOR'S OWN ECONOMIC BENT UNDOUBTEDLY INFLUENCED TENOR OF THE SERIES.

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11. TEXT BEING POUCHED ADDEES. CHRISTOPHER

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